



European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland

## Comment on Ireland's proposed AROPE Target for 2030

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EAPN Ireland welcomes the opportunity to comment on Ireland's proposed At-Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion target for 2023 as part of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

We would like to comment on two aspects of the proposal.

1. The level of ambition
2. The proposal that two-thirds of this reduction will be made up of children

### 1. The level of ambition

We welcome that the current proposal is to go beyond both of those suggested in the two scenarios set out by the European Commission.

However, we believe that the proposal to only lift 90,000 out of AROPE by 2030 is extremely unambitious. In reality this would only mean a reduction of under 9% of the estimated 1,014,000 people currently at-risk of poverty, or experiencing severe material and social deprivation or living in a household with a very low work intensity.

This assessment is based on the following:

- We believe that the overall EU commitment of a reduction of at least 15 million people At-Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion by 2030 is in itself not adequately ambitious.
- The current national poverty reduction target in the Roadmap for Social Inclusion is 'to reduce the national consistent poverty rate to 2% or less of the population by 2025. Based on 2020 population estimates this is a reduction from just under 274,000 people in 2019, to at least 100,000 by 2020, a reduction of 174,000 people. While recognising the differences in how the at-risk and deprivation are calculated at national and EU level, the ambition in the Roadmap is completely lost in the proposed national AROPE target.
- While recognising that the proposal is to review the AROPE target in 2025, pushing out the timeline in the Roadmap for achieving AROPE target from 2025 to 2030 while also using population estimates from those years further weakens the ambition in the target. Using population projections of 5.24 million people for 2025, a 16.7% AROPE would be 875,000 people. This involves a reduction of 138,920.
- The Europe 2020 poverty reduction target was a direct 20 million reduction from 117 million to at least 97 million people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. This was irrespective of increases in the EU population. Each member state had a poverty reduction target linked to its proportion of the EU population. During that period Ireland had a population equivalent to round 1% of the EU population and so were set a target of 200,000 of the 20 million EU target. Setting a target of only 90,000 people for the next ten years would be a major reduction in ambition.

### Proposal

There are a number of options we propose for increasing the ambition.

- a) Retaining the current AROPE target of 16.7% for 2025, involving a reduction of at least 138,920 people using 2025 population estimates. This in itself is less than 14% of the current population at risk of poverty or social exclusion.
- b) Similar to under the Europe 2020 strategy set a national target based on the Irish proportion of the EU population. In 2020 the EU had a population of just under 448 million people, of which the Irish population makes up around 1.1%. Therefore, the Irish AROPE target as a % of the EU AROPE target would be at least 165,000 people. This would be just over 16% of the current population at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Whichever target is adopted would be reviewed in 2025.

## **2. The proposal for two-thirds of this reduction will be made up of children**

Given that child poverty is higher than that of the general population, and the Government has failed by a large margin to meet the target set out for the reduction of child poverty as set out in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, an ambitious target for the reduction of child poverty is welcome.

However, we would question the ambition to only reduce the AROPE for the adult population by 30,000 over ten years. It is important to highlight this for a number of reasons.

- While many of the households at-risk of poverty or social exclusion are households with children, many are also not. It is critical therefore that AROPE target enables a focus on the range of households with a high risk of poverty or social exclusion, including many who are invisible in official SILC reports. This includes those who are unemployed, lone parent households, people with a disability, single adult households, those living in disadvantaged urban and rural areas, people who are homeless and minorities including migrants, those in the asylum system and Traveller and Roma.
- The vast majority of poor children live in poor households. Therefore, while child specific prevention and intervention measures are important, policy measures at family and community level play a crucial role in reducing child poverty.

Having a more ambitious overall AROPE target as outlined above would enable a greater balance across the groups at-risk of poverty or social exclusion while retaining an ambitious target for reducing child poverty.

It is important also that targets are the drivers of the range of integrated policy measures that are adequate to ensure the targets are achieved.